

# Anti-vaccination nurses in Australia face punishment

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Nurses and midwives promoting anti-vaccination messages in Australia could face punishment, the industry regulator warned Thursday, as the country tackles recent outbreaks of preventable diseases.

In response to increasing concern about anti-vaccination movements, Canberra last year introduced a "no jab, no pay" law blocking parents who refuse to vaccinate their children from accessing some government benefits.

The move followed outbreaks of measles in Europe and parts of the United States, and local whooping cough and measles cases in Australia.

Some of those who reject vaccination fear that a triple vaccine for measles, mumps and rubella could cause autism, even though the theory has been widely discredited by various studies.

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) said it issued the warning after reports of a "small number" of practitioners who "promoted anti-vaccination statements to patients and the public via social media which contradict the best available scientific evidence".

"The NMBA and AHPRA (Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency) take their responsibility of public protection very seriously, and will take regulatory action on nurses or [midwives](#) who promote anti-vaccination statements to patients and the public," the regulator said.

Australian midwife Belinda Henkel told Sydney's Daily Telegraph she would not remove anti-vaccination messages she had already posted on Facebook despite the regulator's warning, but would now support industry practice.

"I'm not removing anything that I've got on the site but I've agreed to acquiesce to AHPRA's request and I have said that I will give unequivocal support to the vaccination regime that we have," she said.

NMBA did not name individual cases, but said sanctions against nurses and midwives include being slapped with a caution and having their ability to practise medicine restricted.

Serious cases could be referred to an industry tribunal, where practitioners face harsher penalties such as having their registration suspended or cancelled.

The board also called on patients and the public to report nurses and midwives they had concerns about.

"As trusted health professionals, nurses and midwives play a key role in helping people make decisions about their healthcare," NMBA chair Lynette Cusack said.

"The board's statement makes clear its expectations of [nurses](#) and midwives when providing advice about vaccinations."

Australia's Social Services Minister Christian Porter said in July immunisation rates had lifted since the introduction of "no jab, no pay".

More than 5,700 children whose parents were receiving childcare payments and had previously registered as vaccination objectors had their children immunised, he said, adding that vaccination rates for one

to five-year-olds had reached 93 percent for the first time.

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